

Senator Slap, Representative Elliot, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Spencer Dicembrino and I am a member of UConn's Undergraduate Student Government.

**I support Raised Bill No. 5033, AN ACT ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FOOD-INSECURE STUDENTS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**

I am a first year finance major here at the University of Connecticut, and food insecurity is a personal subject to me. Food has been more than something that energizes me and gets me from point A to point B. It has been my culture for my entire life, and I find its importance has grown since I came to the University of Connecticut. It not only keeps me saturating my cultural roots, but it is the main hub of my social life. At the dining halls is where my friends and I spend several hours of our day laughing, sharing, and doing work. It is where I walk into to be greeted by dozens of people reaching out a hand to dap me up. Food, to me, is a process, a culture, a community, and a school in itself.

Everyday I know that I am blessed to be able to afford a meal plan and have easy access to unlimited food. Without it, I don't think I would be thriving mentally, emotionally, and physically the way I am now. Being introverted, I struggle to find ways in which I can be social. Most of my day, I have no desire to talk to people or do the same activities that most people socialize at. Because of this, I can without a doubt say that the success of my life right now is dependent on the strong base that is the dining hall and its food.

I know people that don't have the same access to food, and I can always feel their struggle. I can feel them being left out of an important social hub and then lacking the essential food needed for their school success. It is like being hit twice. First, they miss out socially and get put into a negative feedback loop, and then their underwhelming diet makes the negative thoughts and actions worse. It is tough to see from the outside, especially when I see the amount of waste from the dining halls. I used to work in kitchens in high school, so naturally I can spark up a conversation with a fellow cook. Without hesitation, the one thing they all agree on is that too much food is wasted. Always, more food than what is going to be eaten is cooked in order to fully feed everyone that is expected to eat there; but never is anywhere near all of it eaten. Since we know there is going to be more food, why should we waste it? Why should we throw it out knowing there are food deprived students?

Over 10% of the population, according to the attached research, claims they often worry that their food would run out before having enough money to buy more. This is 1 in 10 of our students and my classmates. To help them, you help the school, Connecticut, and the next generation of humanity. You help empower great thought and hidden potential in brain-fogged individuals. Food is power, and I will never doubt the power of food or what this bill will do for thousands of individuals.

<https://senate.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1323/2020/03/2020-0302-Student-Affairs-Handout.pdf>